

UNION IS STRENGTH.

THE ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETIES.

THE attention of the architectural profession, and of other persons—and happily they are not few who take an interest in all that relates to architecture—is at this moment drawn to the consideration of applying, as well a remedy for the abuses which have crept into a noble pursuit, as of affording encouragement to those individuals who have entered it with high aspirations after fame, and a praiseworthy wish to run a noble career.

Having deprecated the want of union which exists among the institutions into which the profession is divided, I ventured to express an opinion that a remedy for this and many other ills might be found through the instrumentality of an architectural college, if well supported by architects, and by those who are either strongly engaged by collateral ties or by inclination, in upholding just and correct views of a profession which influences so largely the comforts, wants, and tastes of society.

I now proceed to show that an institution already exists, which might, either with modifications or with additions, be made to serve as a groundwork for a general, comprehensive, and well-organized scheme. In alluding to the "College of the Freemasons of the Church," I cannot do better than quote the very first law, to show its extensive scope and high purpose.

"The college was founded on Advent eve, in the year of our Lord and Saviour one thousand eight hundred and forty-two, 'for the recovery, maintenance, and furtherance of the true principles and practice of architecture; for the sanction of good principles of building, and for the condemnation of bad ones; for the exercise of scientific and experienced judgment in the choice and use of the most proper materials; for the infusion, maintenance, and advancement of science throughout architecture; and, by developing the powers of the college upon a just and beneficial footing, to raise architecture from its present vituperated condition, and to bring around it the same unquestioned honour which is at present enjoyed by almost every other profession; and further, for the charitable assistance of those and their families over whom it shall please Providence, after a life devoted to the service and practice of architecture and its dependent arts, that need shall fall.' And whereas, with the ancient freemasons, who were indeed of the church, architectural construction was carried to so wonderful a degree of perfection, that, by the science of co-gravitation, vast and beautiful fabrics were erected to endure, though composed even of small masses of mean and perishable materials,—therefore this institution, intended for the cultivation and growth of the highest class of scientific constructive architecture, shall be intitled 'THE COLLEGE OF THE FREEMASONS OF THE CHURCH.'"

Such is the language with which the college sets forth its endeavour to bring the wisdom and experience of the past to bear upon the present and the future,—language whose justice every candid mind must recognize as founded in a sound and far-seeing love of art and artists, and as placing concisely before the profession the evils which afflict it on the one hand, and on the other, the remedy which may be applied.

To the late estimable and gifted Alfred Bartholomew is to be ascribed the chief title of founder of this college, which he was not permitted to see fully carried out; and his early departure from a profession which he loved and adorned, may be reckoned as one main cause that the institution has not made that rapid progress which its excellent intentions deserve. Of the eighty-eight laws which at present form the guidance of the members, it may be sufficient to quote law 3, which will serve to show the wide and popular basis upon which the institution was to be established.

Law III. The members of the college shall consist of five classes, viz. :—

1st. Architectural fellows, who shall be gentlemen who have been educated to the profession of architecture or of civil engineering, and who are not under the age of twenty-four years, or who have been in the actual practice of the profession of architecture or civil engineering during five years.

2nd. Architectural associates, who shall be

students in practical architecture, or in civil engineering in connection with architecture, under the age of twenty-four years, and who, on arriving at the age of twenty-four years, shall be eligible as architectural fellows.

3rd. Clerical fellows, who shall be clergymen of the United Church of England and Ireland.

4th. Lay fellows, who shall be gentlemen, or respectable persons who are not architects, nor civil engineers, nor clergymen of the United Church of England and Ireland.

5th. Honorary fellows, who shall be persons eminent for science or for learning, or for antiquarian or for architectural knowledge, or who, from station or through other means, have the power of furthering or patronising practical architecture."

It will be seen that these classifications are sufficiently clear in their objects, admitting within the pale all members of the profession, yet not excluding any persons who, without pretending to a knowledge, may have a great love of art, and an anxious desire to be joined with artists in promoting and elevating those pursuits to which their feelings in common are drawn, a union which cannot fail to be productive of as much pleasure to the amateur, as of encouragement to the artist, who has too many drawbacks in his career not to require and appreciate the sympathy of well-informed and well-judging men. It is far from my wish to have it supposed for one moment that, in holding out an invitation to the profession in its different branches to join the College of the Freemasons of the Church, I would insist, in the first place, that its laws and regulations are perfect, or, in the second, that already existing Institutions, especially if of older date, can be expected to belong to the college without some concession on its part. Yet it is to be hoped that existing institutions, and why need I scruple to name them?—that the elder Institute of British Architects, the younger Architectural Association, and that still more recently-established society, for the laudable purpose of publishing architectural works, may one and all, setting aside every feeling but the ennobling one—zeal for the common good, consent to make common cause with the Freemasons of the Church, in whose name I am privileged to state that on their side every just concession will be made, every private feeling will be sacrificed to promote the desirable objects set forth in the heading of their laws. For my own part, I am prepared to surrender into the hands of any other architect more gifted than myself—and such a one is easily to be found in the ranks of my noble profession,—the distinction conferred upon me by the college, much as I prize it, and retire into the ranks, a humble but zealous follower. On the side of the college, therefore, there would be no obstacle in the way of meeting other institutions with the open hand of fellowship; and if it be asked why do not its members rather fuse into other societies, than expect to be joined by those whose date is older, or whose numbers are greater than their own, the reply is simply this,—that, without casting the slightest disrespect upon any other society, or doubting its usefulness, it is their conscientious belief that only in their own body is to be found a well-digested code of laws for every occasion befitting the artist, the gentleman, and the Christian, a well-considered provision for every branch of art or science connected with architecture, a wide unexclusive plan of membership, the whole scheme being intended and calculated in their opinion to form "a kindly community of the most advanced science, knowledge, and experience." (Law IX.)

The college, limited hitherto in its fellowship, and, consequently, in its means of usefulness, has not altogether been idly or unprofitably employed. Its meetings have taken place every month—one sign of activity—and the papers read on various subjects have appeared in the periodical devoted to the profession. Of the value of these papers it is not for me to pass an opinion; such as they are they were freely contributed to the general treasury of knowledge. The restoration of St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, is chiefly owing to the intervention of the college.

It now remains to be seen whether this appeal, imperfect as it is adequately to express the high objects and important interests it would advocate, is to receive countenance from those who, having run a lengthened and

prosperous career, should yet bestow thought for the rising generation,—from those who are even now struggling in their onward path to fame,—from those also, who, wishing to aid in working out the great truths of art, have not hitherto had the proper opportunity,—from all, in short, who desire the advancement of a science, whose results are seen to cover the length and breadth of a land, of which they ought to be the noblest monuments for taste, skill, and judgment. Such would be the case were architects led to emulate those master builders (*apex-riores*,—*Bible translation*) of former days, the Freemasons of the middle ages, who developed the beauties of their art equally in the cottage and in the palace, in the humble parish church as in the stately minster. But these men formed a community; and if we imitate their example we may hope to imitate some portion of their spirit, and thus we may also expect to see in a country where building is carried on to so great an extent, more attention paid to architectural construction, so necessary to the preservation, and, therefore, true economy, of either public or private structures.

G. R. FRENCH.

At the request of the committee of this society we give insertion to this appeal, and we do so readily, because it proposes what we have personally for some time advocated, viz.,—UNION,—the drawing together into one body of all who are engaged in the study of architecture, connected with it, or anxious for its advancement, and for the well-being of its professors,—a body which would then indeed be powerful for good. It is necessary, however, that we should say, we do not participate in the belief that the Royal Institute of British Architects is at all likely to "fuse" into the Freemasons of the Church: this is of course out of the question. What is wanted is such an alteration in the laws and regulations of the Institute, and its charter, too, if the alterations cannot be made without, as will enable it to include the other bodies, and effect with power all the good that they, and the best wishers of the art, are aiming at.

AWARD OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY MEDALS.

ON Monday, the 10th inst., the medals, &c., were distributed to the students of the Royal Academy. Mr. Geo. Jones, the Keeper, in the absence of Sir Martin Archer Shee, presided, and expressed his great regret that the president, through indisposition, was unable to attend. Gold medals were presented to Mr. J. A. Vinter, for the best historical painting; to Mr. E. J. Physick, for the best historical bas-relief; and to Mr. Arthur Allom, for the best architectural design. Amongst the recipients of silver medals was Mr. A. F. Young, for the best drawings of the south portico of St. Paul's Cathedral.

At the close Mr. Jones in a few words expressed his deep regret at the death of Mr. Etty, and urged the students to follow the example of perseverance and study which he had set them. He said they should help one another in all things, and not give way to envy: expressing his high satisfaction at the good conduct of the students,—Mr. Jones said he could not speak well enough of it.

I have just returned slowly and sadly from the award of the Royal Academy Medals. And for what were they awarded? For that merit which any labourer's son, properly educated in drawing, might deserve,—immense labour—correct and properly adjusted copyism. The medals must, it seems, be given; but surely they had better be withheld than given for the encouragement (I allude particularly to architecture) of that spirit which has raised the York, the Nelson, and the thousand and one other columns of the same kind over our noble country—the British Museum—the National Gallery—the Russell Institution—St. Pancras, and its numberless senseless imitations—the statues of Trafalgar-square and the Exchange, the Duke and the George. Wonderful, indeed, and god-like was the spirit of beauty which informed the eye, and directed the hand of the Grecian artist,—consistent with itself—consistent with all nature around it! Gloriously does it remain embalmed in the temples and